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PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBE #0198 0601710
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 011710Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY BELIZE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9745
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0025
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0266

UNCLAS BELIZE 000198

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN - JASON MACK

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KWMN](#) [ECON](#) [PINR](#) [BH](#)

SUBJECT: BELIZE: RUN-UP TO THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

REF: A) BELIZE 20; B) BELIZE 105

¶1. (SBU) The ruling Peoples United Party (PUP) recently had manifesto launches in nine municipalities. The Belize City event focused on lower taxes, more jobs and good governance. Some observers have contrasted the PUP's event with the more subdued UDP Plan of Action launch (REF A). Leader of the Opposition Dean Barrow has stated that he may resign as UDP Leader if his party does not have a good showing in the March 1 municipal elections (REF B).

¶2. (SBU) The Association of Concerned Belizeans (ACB) was unsuccessful in recent attempts to organize a formal televised debate among the Belize City candidates, but the ACB appears to have met with some success in its media campaign requesting, in Creole, for Belizeans to - "vote yu mind" (vote your mind), and not to sell their vote for a "dollar beer" (inexpensive beer often flows at political rallies) (REF B).

¶3. (SBU) The upstart "third party," Vision Inspired by the People (VIP), Mayoral Candidate Paul Morgan appears to have built a small, but loyal, following. In a recent conversation with PolOff, Morgan said that, win or lose in Belmopan, he will take the VIP onward to become a national party. VIP has received good press from both The Reporter and Amandala newspapers. For the first time in its almost 30-year existence, Belize's most widely read newspaper, Amandala, has not endorsed either the PUP or UDP, and has, instead, written extensively about the desire for change.

¶4. Historically, the municipal elections have been significant indicators of national politics, and predictors of change in party leadership. If the PUP has a strong showing, the party may decide to take advantage of the victory and call early general elections. Alternatively, if the UDP carries the day, the PUP would likely opt not to call general elections until 2008.

DIETER